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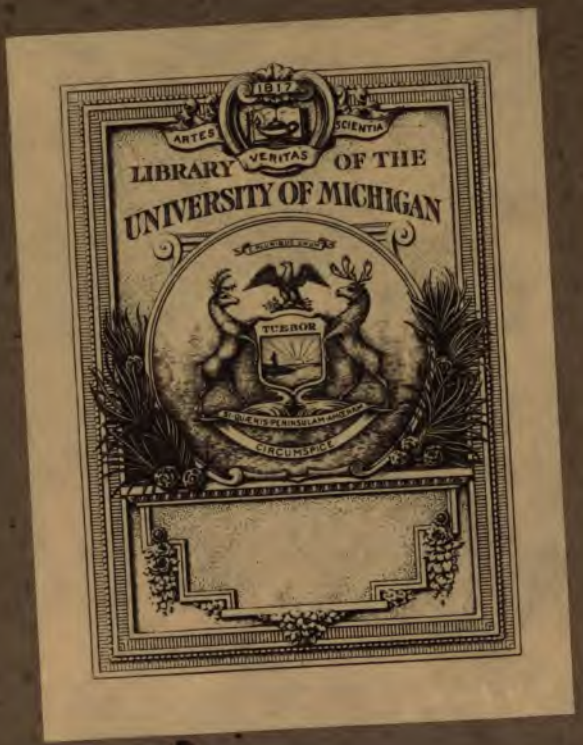
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BULLETIN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

UNIVERSITY STUDIES NO. 8

[THIS ISSUE CLOSES THIS SERIES]

THE MANUAL LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

BY

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SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
JULY, 1914

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER
AT THE POST OFFICE AT SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Reprint from MANUAL TRAINING, June, 1914.

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THE MANUAL LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES.[1]

HERBERT G. LULL.

THE manual labor movement in the United States began about eighty-three years ago (1830) and lapsed about sixty-eight years ago (1845). This movement is interesting because of the light it throws upon the different phases of vocational education of the present time. There had been a few instances of successful attempts in combining manual labor of one kind or another with instruction even from the earliest days in the colonies. But this duty was for the most part performed by the home. The manual labor movement to be discussed in this paper, however, was distinctively a secondary and higher school movement, and it was the first thorogoing trial of the manual labor idea of instruction in the United States. The movement suddenly assumed large proportions about 1830 and ceased to exist almost as suddenly from ten to fifteen years later. Its failure was due to many causes, chief among which were the following: first, there was no insistent social demand for manual labor instruction; second, the notions of the values of manual labor in relation to literary instruction were in error; and third, the labor performed by students could not be made a financial success.

Like many another educational movement, the chief inspiration establishing the manual labor movement came to the United States from Europe. The movement originated with the so-called DeFellenberg schools at Hofwyl, Switzerland, about 1805. Two years later the first building was erected for the "Literary Institution," a school for the children of the patrician families. In 1808, Fellenberg organized the "Agricultural Institution" or "Poor School." Agriculture was to afford the means for the livelihood and the moral education of the poor. About this time a school of "Theoretical and Practical Agriculture" for all classes was formed, equipped, and provided with professors. Fellenberg

[1] I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness in the preparation of this paper to Dr. Richard Gause Boone, Professor of Education of the University of California, who suggested the topic. His books, "Education in Indiana," and "Education in the United States," have been invaluable sources in furnishing a list of manual labor schools as well as interpretations of the movement.

also began his normal school in 1808. In 1823, a school for poor girls was erected, and in 1827, the "Intermediate or Practical School," designed for the children of the middle classes of Switzerland was organized.[2]

EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES.

Fellenberg's principles of education were essentially those of Pestalozzi with perhaps an additional emphasis placed on the educational value of activities. They may be summarized as follows: first, all the faculties of the mind should be developed harmoniously; second, when a new pupil is to be received for instruction, a teacher should secure an accurate knowledge of his individual character—all its resources and defects; third, the child is not to be a mere receptacle of ill-digested knowledge, and the teacher must "endeavor to cultivate conscience, the understanding and the judgment"; fourth, "a great variety of exercises of the body and senses" should be "employed to prepare the pupils for the fulfillment of their destination. All the various relations of space should be presented to the eye." "Instruction in design and the cultivation of the ear by means of vocal and instrumental music" should be provided. Opportunity for systematic observation of natural objects should be provided; fifth, "the social life of the pupils should be made to contribute to the formation of moral character;" sixth, "their religious education should be kept in mind in every branch of study"; seventh, "We occupy the pupils' attention according to their individual necessities and capacities, with philology, the ancient and modern languages, the mathematics and their various modes of application, and a course of historical studies comprising geography statistics, and political economy." Eighth, Fellenberg " was not in favor of artificial incentives or emulation and the fear of punishment."[3]

The following description of Fellenberg's methods of training teachers for industrial work seems very much like that of present day industrial training schools: "In the morning, the hours from five to seven and from eight to twelve were devoted to lessons. In the afternoons the teachers worked in the fields and in the garden. In the evening they prepared the vegetables for the next day's meals. During the harvest they assisted in the fields during the whole day. * * * He gave them * * * every evening a lesson in agriculture in which he ex-

[2] American Journal of Education, 1857, Vol. 3, p. 591.

[3] Quotations from William DeFellenberg. See American Journal of Education, 1857, Vol. 3, p. 591 ff.

plained the various field operations and their connection. He conversed with them on the subject of making agricultural labor a valuable aid in education and a subject of instruction for boys. Each evening he talked over with them the labors of the following day." Andrew Bell of Monitorial School fame gave an interesting description of Fellenberg's school for the poor from which the following sentences are taken: "His school for the poor consists of thirty-two boys who work about two hours and study two. They are chiefly employed in agricultural labor; sometimes in mechanical work. They learn reading, writing, ciphering, drawing, music, and the elements of geometry. Music and drawing (designing) are in great request in their schools, and also geometry. The new school has but one master (Verhli) of distinguished merit." The excellency of this school "consists * * * of a single point, which is not much noticed. Every class, and every scholar, has his master always at his side, whether at study, work, or play."[4]

The Fellenberg schools at Hofwyl possess the essential characteristics of the broad gage industrial schools of the United States of the present time. By essential characteristics is not meant buildings, equipment, and developed technic, but educational values, motives, and fundamental methods. With the exception of the school for the children of the "patrician" class the schools at Hofwyl were designed to prepare the pupils for their present and future life work. Manual labor for the "patrician" class was intended to broaden their sympathies for humanity. Manual labor was to develop the pupils' mental powers, for said Fellenberg, "what has been done, and done with thought, will be retained more firmly by the memory, and will bring a surer experience than that which has only been seen or heard." But the disciplinary value was not detached from life's work and life's interests. Manual labor loses its disciplinary value when it becomes drudgery. Manual labor was to induce health of body and mind, and for this purpose, joy and interest in the work and outlook for the work were essential factors of success. Fellenberg held that manual labor should lay the foundation for and be intimately related to the larger social interests of life, economics, politics, religion.

The institutions at Hofwyl continued to exist and flourish until 1848, two years after the death of the great educator and philanthropist. At this time his family discontinued all the schools except the "School for

[4] American Journal of Education, 1861, Vol. 10, pp. 487, 488.

the Poor," which was still in operation as late as 1857. How much longer or whether it still exists the writer is not informed. The principles of education developed and applied by Fellenberg have been widely adopted in his native country, in Europe, and in the United States.[5]

"The first president of Dartmouth College, Doctor Wheelock, admonished his students in 1771, two years after the college was opened, 'to turn the course of their diversions and exercises for their health to the practice of some manual arts, or cultivation of gardens and other lands, at the proper hours of leisure and intermission from studies and vacancies' (i. e. vacations)."[6]

As early as 1790, Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia, advocated agricultural and mechanical pursuits in educational institutions; and in 1796, the first manual labor school was founded in Abbeyville county, S. C.[7]

EARLIEST SCHOOLS IN UNITED STATES.

However, the great interest in the idea of combining manual labor with study in seminaries and colleges was largely inspired by the successes of the Fellenberg manual labor schools at Hofwyl. The Gardiner Lyceum Manual Labor School of Maine was founded in 1823. Then followed the founding of the Fellenberg School at Windsor, Connecticut, in 1824, and in the same year one at Derby, Connecticut, and one at New Harmony, Indiana; the Maine Wesleyan Seminary at Augusta, 1825; the Oneida Institute of Science and Industry, at Whitesboro, New York, 1825-26, which became a very successful manual labor school; the Mechanical Association at Andover Theological Seminary, Massachusetts, 1826; Kenyon College, O., and Waterville College (later Colby College), Maine, both with manual labor departments, 1827; the Genesee Manual Labor School, and the Yates Polytechnic, of New York, before 1830. "This movement came in when the gymnastic movement began to wane." The "idea became strong with the belief that the solution of the whole problem of physical exercise in the educational institutions was found."[8]

[5] American Journal of Education, 1857, Vol. 3, p. 596.

[6] Special report of the Bureau of Education. Educational Exhibits and Conventions, New Orleans, 1884-85. Part 1, p. 426.

[7] Circulars of information of the United States Bureau of Education, No. 4, p. 51.

[8] Report of the United States Commissioner of Education, 1891-92, Vol. 1, page 506.

But the substitution of manual labor for gymnastics as we shall see was not successful. Even the boys preparing for the ministry required the joy of free activities, at least as free as that offered by gymnastics. One must infer after examining the evidence that the majority of the promoters of the manual labor movement missed the essential principles of the movement as it developed at Hofwyl by being all too eager to banish play and substitute a regimen of vigorous and sober discipline. Something of the early Puritan asceticism seems to have been in evidence. Dr. Benjamin Rush, above mentioned, is credited with commending "the Methodists for 'wisely banishing every species of play from their college' and that the experiment had been tried, 'with the happiest effects, of introducing the care of vegetable gardens as an amusement' in the Methodist College at Abington in Maryland. He also says that all the amusements of the children of the Moravians at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 'are derived from their performing the subordinate parts of several of the mechanical arts; and that a considerable portion of the wealth of that worthy and happy society is the product of the labor of their little hands.' "[9]

ORGANIZED PROPAGANDA.

By 1829 the manual labor movement was growing rapidly. At this time Dr. Stephen H. Tyng of Philadelphia and Dr. Elias Cornelius, editor of the "American Quarterly Register" and secretary of the American Education Society, were effectively championing the cause of manual labor. In 1831, the "Society for Promoting Manual Labor in Literary Institutions" was organized in New York, for the purpose of collecting and diffusing information designed to promote the establishment of manual labor schools and seminaries in the United States, and for introducing the system into institutions already established. The system was to be introduced without reducing the quantity or quality of the literary and scientific work. On the contrary, thru the invigorating influence of manual labor on body and mind the standards of literary and scientific attainment were to be raised.

"Mr. Theodore D. Weld, who became secretary of the 'Society for Promoting Manual Labor and Literary Institutions,' visited most of the large towns and leading literary institutions in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama, prosecuting his inquiries

[9] Special Report of the Bureau of Education. Educational Exhibits and Conventions, New Orleans, 1884-85, Part 1, p. 427.

and calling public attention to the manual labor system by public lectures and private conferences with the managers of the institutions visited. Wherever he went he was well received, and his labors resulted in a great increase in public interest in bodily exercise in general and manual labor in particular."[10]

Mr. Weld's first report brought out the following points:

1. The present system of education makes fearful havoc of health and life.
2. The present system of education effeminates the mind.
3. The present system of education is perilous to morals.
4. The present system of education produces an indisposition to effort and destroys habits of activity and industry.
5. The present system of education is so expensive that its practical effects are anti-republican.

He reached the following conclusions:

1. Bodily exercise is indispensable to man from the necessities of his corporeal, intellectual, and moral nature, his individual happiness and social usefulness.
2. This exercise should be incorporated into our system of education and alternated with study in all seminaries of learning.

Still further he concluded:

1. This exercise must be taken daily.
2. The student should spend at least three hours daily in exercise.
3. The exercise should be moderate.

And then he criticizes the gymnastics of the time as:

1. Dangerous; too violent for persons leading sedentary lives.
2. Unnatural; many of the movements required are such as are rarely demanded by human circumstances.
3. Unphilosophical; no visible effects are witnessed, and the production of manifest effects is a main element of interest in muscular movement.
4. Gymnastic exercise excites aversion in the public mind. Leave wooden bars to children and monkey tricks to monkeys.

The author of the report finds manual labor to be a panacea for all the ills above described because:

1. The manual labor system furnishes exercise natural to man.
2. It furnishes exercise adapted to interest the mind.
3. Its moral effects would be peculiarly happy.
4. It would furnish the student with important practical acquisitions.
5. It would promote habits of industry.
6. It would promote independence of character.
7. It would promote originality.

[10] Report of United States Commissioner of Education, 1891-92, Vol. 1, pp. 507-508.

8. It is adapted to render permanent all the manlier features of character.

9. It would afford facilities to the student in acquiring a knowledge of human nature.

10. It would greatly diminish the expense of education.

11. It would increase the wealth of the country.

12. It would do away with those absurd distinctions in society which make the occupation of an individual the standard of his worth.

13. It would have a tendency to render permanent our republican institutions. [11]

At the third annual meeting of the American Lyceum, 1833, the association passed resolutions favoring manual labor schools. Three of the five resolutions are as follows:

1. No system of education is complete which does not provide for the vigor of the body, as well as the cultivation of the mind, and the purity of the heart.

2. The combination of manual labor with study is not only important as the means of promoting health, but is also calculated to invigorate the mind for intellectual labor, and to aid in regulating the feelings and restraining the passions of youth which are so often excited by a sedentary life.

3. That the acquisition of some mechanical employment in early life is desirable to every individual, as a means of relaxation and health, as a resource in case of difficulty, and especially as a means of rendering labor respectable in the eyes of all, and of promoting mutual regard and sympathy between the different portions of society in a republican government.[12]

The manual labor movement lies within the period of the introduction of the American public high school. The high schools originated in response to democratic motives. There was a growing opinion that the seminaries, fitting schools, and finishing schools of the time were aristocratic. The manual labor movement was in part an attempt to check the growth of that opinion, and to correct the aristocratic tendency wherever it existed.

Before considering the question farther it will be profitable to read some of the accounts of a few of the typical manual labor schools.

MANUAL LABOR DEPARTMENT OF WATERVILLE COLLEGE, 1830-1842.

In 1827 the trustees of Waterville College, now Colby College, Maine, voted

"that it is expedient to have a convenient mechanics' shop erected on the college lot, at which students as are disposed may employ themselves a small portion of the day in such work as may yield them some profit." In 1830 the shop was

[11] Report of United States Commissioner of Education, 1891-92, Vol. 1, p. 509.

[12] American Journal of Education, 1864, Vol. 14, p. 544.

built chiefly by the hands of the students. * * * A second and larger shop was erected by the students soon after. Three hours a day were assigned for labor, the work being made ready by the superintendent. The articles manufactured were chiefly doors, blinds, sashes, bedsteads, tables, chairs, and boxes. The organization of the work was such that each student had his special labor—sawing, planing, mortising, grinding tools, etc. In 1832 the members of the department built the large boarding house, long known as the "Commons House." * * * A third shop was added soon after, and carriage making and painting attempted. In 1835, there being no printer in Waterville, a printing office was started in one of the shops. It was supplied with a valuable press, the gift of a manufacturer, and placed in charge of Edgar H. Gray, class of 1838, who had learned the trade of printer. A variety of job work, the annual catalogs, and a 34-page catalog of the library were issued from the "College Press." * * * Students were employed in 1836 in preparing the lumber and in mason work for the college chapel, now Champlin Hall, and for three professors' houses. Three shops were fully occupied at this time, the students earning from fifty cents to two dollars and fifty cents per week. At the accession of Dr. Pattison to the presidency in 1836, it was found that several thousand dollars had been sunk in the manual labor experiment.

The want of success may, without doubt, be mainly referred to the fact that the larger number of student workmen possessed little skill and produced inferior work. * * * But on the other hand, it attracted many students to the college and added a class of young men most valuable to the world by reason of the qualities developed in their struggle to obtain an education. The list of laborers in the shops bears the names of many of the most honored sons of the institution; men of energy, ability and culture, including those of two college presidents.[13]

MANUAL LABOR AND THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE, EATONTON, GEORGIA, 1833-44.

At the annual convention of the Georgia Baptists in 1831, it was decided to establish "in some central part of the state as soon as funds should justify it, a classical and theological school, which would unite agricultural labor with study and be open for those only preparing for the ministry." Accordingly in 1832 the school was established at Eatonton. "In December, 1844, the manual labor system, which had been on trial since the foundation of the institute in 1831, was abandoned, having proved to be inefficacious. Several other attempts had been made during the same decade to establish manual labor schools in different places, which, with one exception, had likewise failed. The country was not yet ready for the introduction of that new feature in education."

[13] United States Bureau of Education, Circulars of Information, No. 3, 1913, pp. 108-9.

Another manual labor school was established at Cave Springs, Georgia, in 1839, and was known as the Hearn Manual Labor School. This school continued to operate until it was destroyed by the Federal troops during the Civil War.[14]

JACKSON COLLEGE, TENNESSEE, MANUAL LABOR DEPARTMENT, 1832-37.

Jackson College was a Presbyterian school that took its rise in a manual labor institute in Maury county, some ten miles from Columbia. About the year 1832 the institute was erected by act of the legislature into Jackson College. In 1837 the college was removed to Columbia. It was burned by the Federal army during the war. A report of the board of trustees in the year 1833 tells us that the manual labor feature of the institute was retained by the college. Every student was required to work two hours per day. As the college was not able to build shops and buy tools for mechanical labor, the students had the past year engaged mostly in farming. They had with little help cultivated between 50 and 60 acres of corn and 2 acres of potatoes and had cleared 18 acres of new land. The writer of the report assures us that manual labor is beneficial to the help of students and as evidence that it does not interfere with their studies, says that those students who have been consulted concurred in saying that, instead of retarding, manual labor had accelerated their progress in study. Nevertheless, the manual labor feature was abolished when the college was removed to Columbia. * * *

FRANKLIN COLLEGE TENNESSEE, MANUAL LABOR DEPARTMENT, 1845—

Franklin College, five miles east of Nashville, was founded in 1845, by Rev. Tolbert Fanning, a prominent man among the Disciples, or Christians. It was opened as a manual labor school. Mr. Fanning aimed to bring education within the reach of the poor. The college was closed at the outbreak of the Civil War. The building was burned in 1866 and never rebuilt. The property is now devoted to the Fanning Orphan School.[15]

TROY CONFERENCE ACADEMY, VERMONT, A METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH SCHOOL, 1833—

It is a part of the plan of the school to connect with it the manual labor system. This is required, first, for the preservation of the health of the student, and second, to bring education within the reach of those who are not able to pay the full amount of tuition and board of ordinary academies. This class is very numerous, and they are looking anxiously to the complete establishment of our academy in Poultney, with high hopes of obtaining a good education.[16]

[14] United States Bureau of Education, Circular of Information No. 4, 1889, pp. 60, 61, 70.

[15] United States Bureau of Education, Circular of Information No. 5, 1893, pp. 235-6.

[16] United States Bureau of Education, Circular of Information No. 4, 1900, p. 117.

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE, PA., MANUAL LABOR DEPARTMENT, 1830-40.

The college was reopened in 1833. A marked feature of the new course of study was the prominence given to manual labor. This was part of the movement which affected a large number of American colleges about this time, and arose from the demand for a "practical education," from the students' need of some means of self-support, and from the lack of facilities for physical exercise. In 1834 the trustees "set apart several acres to be leased to students at a nominal rent, and arranged to employ students to make furniture and carry on improvements about the college grounds. No one, however, was to be required to perform manual labor." Not a success. Not announced after 1840.[17]

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, CONNECTICUT, MANUAL LABOR DEPARTMENT, 1833-1839.

In August 1833, a seal was adopted and a strange departure, but one characteristic of early Methodist colleges, determined on. * * * Resolved, That the necessary arrangement for connecting mechanical and agricultural labor with the course of instruction be made, each student to labor at least two hours every day, the system to be introduced at once, so that parents may have assurance that the physical as well as the intellectual and moral education will be attended to.

This system was continued until 1839 and then given up, as it did not prove a success.[18]

HOWARD COLLEGE, ALABAMA, 1833.

In 1833 the Baptist convention appointed a committee of five "to establish in Alabama a seminary of learning on the manual labor plan for the education of indigent young men called to the ministry." This committee located the institution on a farm, purchased for the purpose, about a mile east of the town of Greensborough. In 1834 the convention resolved that the institution should have both a literary and theological department, and provided for its incorporation as the "Alabama Institute of Literature and Industry."[19]

The reasons for the failure of the manual labor system in the Alabama Institute of Literature and Industry, later known as Howard College, are interesting.

The impracticability of the manual labor system soon became apparent. * * * A hundred hands were to be employed by the superintendent for two

[17] United States Bureau of Education, Circular of Information, No. 4, 1902, p. 13.

[18] United States Bureau of Education, Circular of Information, No. 2, 1893, p. 258.

[19] United States Bureau of Education, Circular of Information, No. 3, 1889, Chapter 3, pp 172.

or three hours. The most of these had never been taught and they often did more harm than good. Implements and work shops in corresponding numbers had to be provided, these to lie idle three-fourths of every day, and often the fields would scarcely be reached before the bell would summon them to return, and that too often at a time when the care of the crop required immediate and prolonged attention. It was soon discovered that a full corps of regular hands had to be employed in addition to the students. But the students had to be paid for their labor, for the subscribers and patrons had been led to expect that in this way a student could meet the greater part of his expenses. Board and tuition had to be put at scarcely more than nominal rate. Board was $1.25 per week, and tuition $10.00 per session of five months.[20]

OBERLIN COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE, (LATER OBERLIN COLLEGE), OHIO, MANUAL LABOR DEPARTMENT, 1833-1838.

The Rev. John J. Shipherd and Mr. Philo P. Stewart decided to establish "A community of Christian families with a Christian school which should be 'a center of religious influence and power which should work mightily upon the surrounding country and the world—a sort of missionary institution for training laborers for the work abroad'—the school to be conducted on the manual labor system, and to be open to both young men and young women. It was not proposed to establish a college but simply an academy for instruction in English and useful languages; and, if providence should favor it, in 'practical Theology.' In accordance with this plan the corporate name, 'Oberlin Collegiate Institute' was chosen. Not until 1851 was a new and broader charter obtained, this time under the name of 'Oberlin College.'" "An essential of the Oberlin plan was the manual labor department. The objects to be attained by this department were eloquently set forth in the first circular of the institute as follows:

This department is considered indispensable to a complete education.

It is designed first, to preserve the student's health.

For this purpose all of both sexes, rich and poor, are required to labor four hours daily.

There being an intimate sympathy between soul and body, their labor promotes as a second object, clear and strong thought with a happy moral temperament.

A third object of this system is its pecuniary advantage; for while taking that exercise necessary to health, a considerable portion of the student's expenses may be defrayed.

This system, as a fourth object, aids essentially in forming habits of industry and economy and secures, as a fifth desideratum, an acquaintance with common things.

[20] United States Bureau of Education, Circular of Information, No. 1, 1888, pp. 271-2.

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